

Between Differing Worlds

Young, Muslim and Citizen



Get on with your work

A Year 8 RE lesson. We're copying pictures of Hindu gods into our books. 'These are the people who crashed the planes into the twin towers, aren't they, miss?' says someone. 'No, Jeanette,' she replies. 'That was Muslims, we're doing Hindus. Just get on with your work.'

You can't go

My best friend isn't a Muslim. A few days ago her grandmother died and the funeral is later this week. My friend hasn't ever been to a funeral before and she's worried sick about it. Plus, she's really upset about her nan. She's asked me to go with her. I mention this to someone else. 'You can't go,' they say. 'It's *haram*.'

No help at all

I get grief from non-Muslim friends because I don't want to do drugs and alcohol, and stuff. But they're friends and I like hanging out with them. I ask the imam for advice and he just says live in peace with them, but don't live like them. Keep yourself holy and separate. I feel this is no help, no help at all.

A very bad Muslim

A Muslim friend of mine says all kuffars will go to hell when they die, even those who are religious and decent. I say that I can't believe this. I'd rather join them in hell, I say, than be separated from them. She says, well in that case I'm a very bad Muslim.

Goes ballistic

A group of us in the school playground are talking about football. A teacher approaches. 'What are you boys talking about?' she asks. 'Don't worry, miss,' says Tariq, who's always ready with a quick answer. 'We're just planning the next 9/11.' The teacher goes ballistic and says we've all got to go and see the headteacher. Why do so few white teachers have a sense of humour?

Pack of Islamophobes

I ask a friend if he got the job he was interviewed for. 'No, they were a pack of Islamophobes, that's why.' I ask if that was the reason they gave. 'No, the reason they gave was a) I turned up late, b) I let my mobile phone go off twice whilst the interview was taking place and c) I didn't answer any of their questions. But their real reason, no doubt about it, was Islamophobia. They just don't like Muslims, they won't have Muslims working for them, and that's that.'

Not serving you

I'm in a newsagents when a woman comes in wearing full hijab. 'You should not be allowed,' says the man behind the counter. 'I'm not serving you. Get out of my shop.'

No need to obey

My older brother is giving me a lift in his car. We come to some traffic lights, which are red. He looks both ways, sees nothing is coming, and drives straight across with the lights still red. 'It's a kuff law,' he says. 'No need for us Muslims to obey it.'

Only a phase

A friend says: 'As you know, I'm a convert, or revert, and I get extra hassle 'cos I'm white and a Muslim. People who aren't Muslims make even more fun of me than Muslims do sometimes. They think it's only a phase and don't take me seriously, some of my family too.'

A bit of teasing

A friend tells me she's being teased by other girls. 'We killed hundreds of your lot yesterday ... Osama bin Laden's your dad, innit ... we're getting our revenge for what you lot did to us in Afghanistan last week' I ask if she has told her class teacher. Yes, she's told her teacher, and her teacher said: 'Never mind, it's not serious. It'll soon pass. You'll have to expect a bit of teasing at times like this.'

Back door

My mother's a school governor. She proposes, following discussions with pupils and parents, that there should be some Islamic Awareness classes at the school on a voluntary basis. 'We'd just be letting Al Qaeda in by the back door,' says the chair. The other governors all seem to agree, or anyway not to bother.

Crying his eyes out

My next-door neighbours are white. The other day their little girl comes up to me, crying her eyes out. She goes: 'The Pakis are coming, the Pakis are coming'. I sit her down and calm her and get her to explain. She refers to two aeroplanes that have flown low over our area and says she believes they were piloted by terrorists on their way to attack our street.

Pakistan next month

My uncle tells me he's paying for me to go to Pakistan next month. I'm thrilled. I haven't ever been there and have always wanted to go and meet my relatives, and see the beautiful land my mum and dad came from, so many years ago. 'Thank you so much, Chachaji.' He replies saying that whilst there I'm going to get engaged and there'll probably be a *nikah* as well.

Anything

'Can I tell you a secret?' asks a friend. 'Yes.' 'Promise you won't tell anyone?' 'Yeah, promise.' 'Well, I've met this amazing guy. He understands everything so well. My problems, yours, everyone's. The worldwide influence of Kuffars has got to be eliminated. It may sound weird to you, but it all makes really good sense when he says it. Next week I'm going to a training camp with him. I think I'd do anything for the Muslim cause – anything, you know what I mean?'

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